

WHAT'S A BOSS SUPPOSED TO DO?
(Case Study in Leadership)

This conversation is being carried on by four supervisors who are having lunch together. Assume that you are in a perfect position to listen in on their conversation (in the next booth perhaps) and hear this entire discussion from beginning to end.

In order to identify the characters, here is a brief sketch about each one:

Bill - A seasoned supervisor who possesses good judgment and is a little to the conservative side.

Joe - A rather young man who has attended management school, read books, and feels that sweeping changes should be made in American management.

Lou - A likeable, sociable, outgoing fellow whose wit enlivens the discussion.

Sam - A conservative old school supervisor.

Read the following dialogue and be prepared to discuss:

1. The personalities of these supervisors.
2. The problems which they bring up.
3. Suggestions you would make to these men.
4. What you have learned from this analysis.

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Lou: The trouble with most supervisors is that they don't know enough to come in out of the rain. (Laughter)

Sam: That may be true of some supervisors but don't count everyone in.

Lou: Ha! Some are all wet already! (Laughter)

What's A Boss Supposed To Do?
(Case Study in Leadership)

-2-

Sam: I'm serious. You have to go through the school of experience in order to be a good supervisor. There's no other way to learn it.

Joe: It takes more than experience.

Lou: You say that because you're not old enough to have much.
(Laughter)

Joe: You can have lots of experience and just make the same mistakes time after time. A man needs to learn some theory in order to improve his performance.

Sam: There you go — theory, what we need are men who are seasoned. Men who have been through the school of hard knocks.

Lou: Just so they haven't been knocked out by the hard punches.
(Laughter)

Bill: But Sam, haven't you built theories or principles upon the experience you've had?

Sam: I'm not going to be fancy enough to call them theories. I've learned things like —

The harder you work the more successful you are.

Don't let anyone take advantage of you, and do your thinkin' at home and your work in the shop.

Lou: Doesn't sound like much fun to me.

Sam: It isn't, but it pays off.

Joe: This all sounds rather self-centered to me. So what have we done for society?

Sam: So what has society done for me?

Joe: Sam, what I mean is — what have we done to help people develop on the job? What have we done to help people feel that they belong to a good outfit? What have we done to inform them of their responsibilities?

What's A Boss Supposed To Do ?
(Case Study in Leadership)

-3-

- Sam: That and 10¢ will buy you a cup of coffee.
- Bill: That and 10¢ will buy a lot of coffee. You know, Sam, we can't supervise the way we used to. Times have changed. We have to motivate people to perform. We talk to them, sympathize with them, give them a chance to express themselves.
- Lou: Yea, we do all the work and they get all the pay. (Laughter)
- Sam: Sure times have changed but people haven't changed. I believe in treating them all alike. Don't have any favorites. Treat 'em all the same.
- Joe: But, that doesn't allow for individual differences.
- Sam: Individual what ?
- Joe: Differences. You know, some people are smarter than others, some are sociable, some introverted, some frustrated.
- Sam: Those 25¢ words sound good, but the only one I understand is frustrated. Supervisors are the frustrated ones.
- Lou: Yes, they don't know whether to fish or cut bait. (Laughter)
- Joe: Maybe they should know. You can't treat all people alike. People don't respond the same way.
- Sam: They respond if you put the bee on them. Don't put up with monkey business or you'll be catering to employees rather than supervising.
- Bill: Maybe this whole thing would make more sense if we looked at it a different way. Do you have any children, Sam ?
- Lou: Yes, he hasn't been working as hard as he pretends. (Laughter)
- Sam: Sure, I've got five kids.
- Bill: Can you treat them all the same way ?

What's A Boss Supposed To Do ?
(Case Study in Leadership)

-4-

Sam: Shucks no, why they're so different I sometimes wonder if they're all mine.

Lou: They'll probably grow up to be book readin', theory makin', inexperienced grownups. That's the way it is, you know, Pa does all the work and the kids act like he doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain.

Joe: Sounds like two of us got cut with that last thrust.

Bill: Well, it seems to me that we have to know what people really want if we are to deal with them successfully.

Sam: That's easy -- money -- that's what they want.

Bill: Sure, to a point they do ...

Sam: (Interrupting) That IS the point. Isn't that what we all want? Joe, Lou, you -- money -- that's it.

Bill: Yes, to a point, but they want something else, too.

Sam: Sure -- more money.

Bill: Let's assume that wages are the same or better than other industries pay -- then people want such things as security, recognition, influence, opportunity, and a sense of belonging.

Joe: That's what they told us at the Institute.

Sam: Well, rooty toot. Did you wear a racoon coat when you wnet there ?

Lou: Say, that should be my line. I'll make the funnies, if you don't mind. (Laughter)

Bill: And people like to be asked for their ideas and suggestions. Like to feel that they are contributing to the success of the company.

Sam: That's the first time I ever heard that said. Actually, supervising is a matter of give and take. We give and they take.

What's A Boss Supposed To Do?
(Case Study in Leadership)

-5-

Lou: There you go again. They take the cash and let the credit go.

Sam: The best way to build respect of employees is to be able to do all the jobs in your department. I can and they do good work because they know they can't fool me.

Joe: Technical competence is not enough. It's the way we deal with personalities and people that brings about increased productivity.

Lou: We're going to become so productive here that we'll lose our job security. Time to go back to work, fellas. To each his own — problems, that is. Where would we be without our problems?